CHAPMAN ROAD

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Relative Marks, Relative Surfaces
Bryan Maycock
2 December 2000 - 4 February 2001
Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Fred C Manning Gallery (4)

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Director's Foreword

The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia is pleased to present Relative Marks, Relative Surfaces • Bryan Maycock. The artist, through his family ancestors, has provided a link to his roots and provides our visitors with a stimulating and educational exhibition.

We are proud to present this exhibition of Bryan Maycock's recent work. Those interested in the study of genealogy will find particular enjoyment in this artist's work. For over 25 years, Maycock has been investigating the work and lives of his ancestors, studying the trade skills in his family history and incorporating some of the materials and processes used by his forebears into his art making. The results are a series of two and three dimensional works that explore and present Maycock's personal genealogical journey.

Born in Newmarket, England in 1944, Maycock emigrated to Canada in 1969. In addition to many solo and group exhibitions of his work, Maycock has been teaching full time at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design since 1984, where he is now an Associate Professor and Chair of the Foundation Division.

It is an honor for the AGNS to present the work of this local artist and art educator in our community, and to have yet another opportunity to partner with and strengthen our ties with the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. Once again, curator Peter Dykhuis has provided his perspective on the work of the artist through a creatively written essay.

I wish to express my thanks to the curator, programming staff, and all AGNS staff who have assisted with this presentation. We are grateful to The Canada Council for the Arts for their assistance in making this exhibition possible.

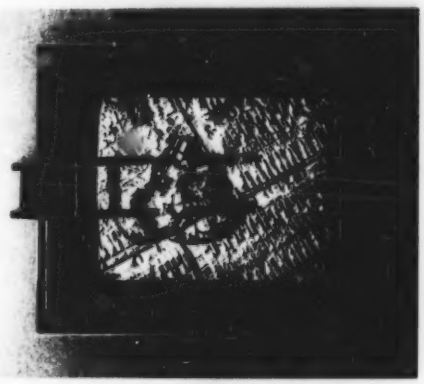
You are invited to enjoy this special exhibition and perhaps take a genealogical journey of your own!

With good wishes,

Bernard Riordon
Director

Acknowledgements

For research assistance and technical support during the production of this work thanks are due to, in England– Terrence E. Burns, Barbara Cooper, Ray Cooper, Ken Harrison, Susan Knox and Marion Maycock – and in Halifax to Thierry Delva, Ken Lamb, Gillian Maycock and Rhea Theriault.



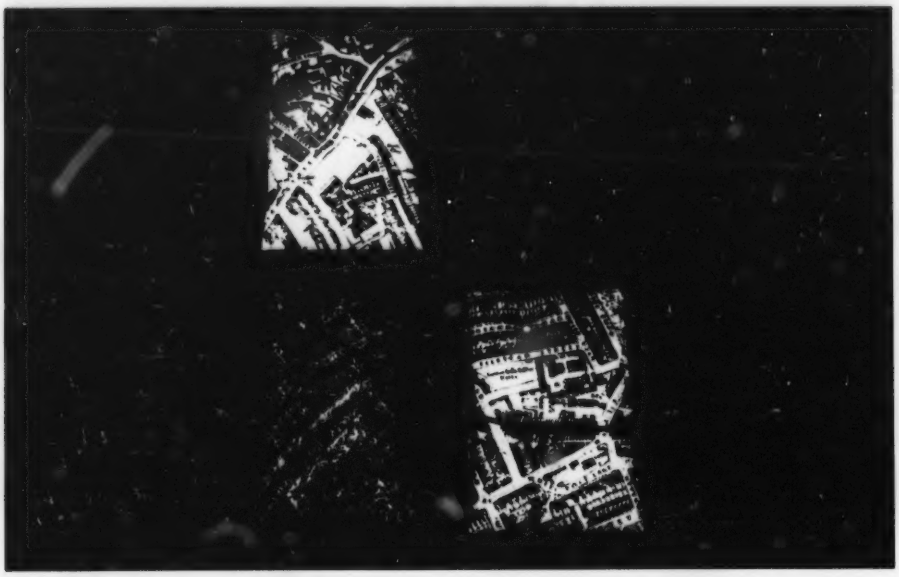
ELECTRICIAN: John Maycock 1911-1983
1997/8, wood, cast aluminum, acid-etched light bulb,
30h x 46w x 40d cm

Cover Image
SLATER: John Maycock abt 1836 - aft 1881
1998, slate & wood 41h x 20.5w x 30d cm

Relative Marks, Relative Surfaces
Bryan Maycock

Based on my interest in collecting world maps, I prepared a presentation to my daughter's grade 4 class in 1996, raising issues about which nations were imaged in the centre of the world and which were not. After much discussion about global pictures and how maps and atlases worked, I wanted to bring this process closer to home and tried an experiment in 'cognitive mapping,' that is, in how individual minds intuitively construct their own spatial frameworks when conceptually mapping territories relevant to them.

I asked all the students to quickly draw maps of how they walked home from school indicating all of the key landmarks that I would have to look for. I received twenty-five individual drawings and descriptions, often of the same physical territory, but each highlighting different features of personal relevance. Some students graphically described the geographic terrain: "Go to the end of the school-yard, take the path to the road, follow the ditch to the bridge, then cut across the field to my street; go past the big tree and you are at my neighbour's yard." Others added spatial measurements but also sites of personal significance: "Walk to Dartmouth Road, go half a kilometre down the hill, past the library to Chickenburger, then walk past Tim Horton's, Wendy's, and MacDonald's to the park and the start of my street." Even other children marked their world by their social references, often adding personal information which was not essential to physical instructions: "Walk up the hill past the red house on the right where my friend Amy lives, then turn right on Falconcrest Drive, past the park with the swingsets where I play, to the brick house next to the park where Sparky my dog is tied up in the yard." And so it went; twenty-five separate, unique, individual graphic and textual representations of the same neighbourhood. Truly one's world is centred according to priorities ascribed to it.



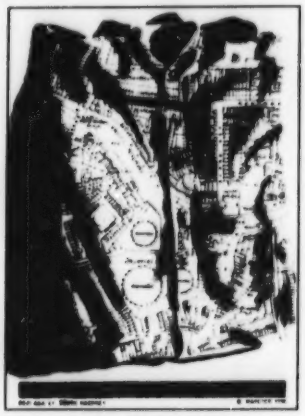
PLAYHOUSE YARD 1859, BLUE ANCHOR ALLEY 1873, SUTHER ROAD 1881 & MONTAGUE ROAD 1886, ADA STREET 1883, DAGMAR ROAD 1891 & WICK ROAD 1900, HIGH STREET 1911, CARY ROAD 1932, TAVISTOCK PLACE 1932
1996-7, eight floor pieces wood & acrylic paint on canvas, each 17h x 47w x 67d cm

Mapping, as a term, is often incorrectly conflated with map-making, a practice within cartography which is concerned with the graphic representation of physical, geographic territory following the assignment of visual codes. In a cartographic reading, the frame and scope of maps, in earlier Modernist culture, gloried in the technical 'knowing' of what the world looked like in mapped representations, often fusing the graphic representation of geographic territory with the controlling influence of political territories of empires. The expanded concept of mapping, however, became a foundational building block within the Postmodernist theories of the past few decades; indeed much of the language found in theoretical texts employs terms such as territories, boundaries, centres, margins, and vectors, each a spatial concept with links to mapping and cartography. It is with the erosion of the centralizing authority of cartography as a political tool that 'mapping' emerged out of the shadows to become a potent metaphor of measured relationships in an expanded field of knowledge and understanding.

In the succinct introduction to the 1999 anthology entitled *Mappings*, editor Denis Cosgrove makes this distinction:

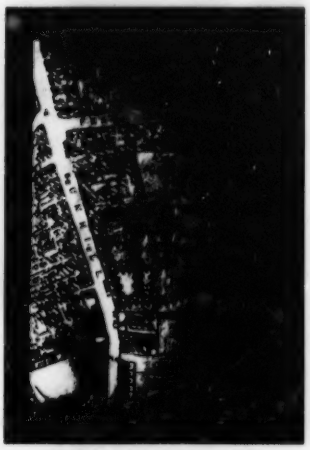
To map is in one way or another to take the measure of a world and more than merely take it, to figure the measure so taken in such a way that it may be communicated between people, places or times. The measure of mapping is not restricted to the mathematical; it may equally be spiritual, political or moral. By the same token, the mapping's record is not confined to the archival; it includes the remembered, the imagined, the contemplated. The world figured through mapping may thus be material or immaterial, actual or desired, whole or part, in various ways experienced, remembered or projected. In scale, mapping may trace a line or delimit and limn a territory of any length or size, from the whole of creation to its tiniest fragments; notions of shape and area are themselves in some respects a product of mapping processes. Acts of mapping are creative, sometimes anxious, moments in coming to knowledge of the world, and the map is both the spatial embodiment of knowledge and a stimulus to further cognitive engagements.[1]

The works assembled for this exhibition **Relative Marks, Relative Surfaces•Bryan Maycock**, are complex mixed media constructions which touch on many of the 'measures' referred to by Denis Cosgrove in the above quote. Maycock's work, assemblages and drawings laden with mapped references, narrative objects, and biographical details about family members, function as complex, highly coded and referential work which, for their modest scale, are densely packed with spatial, social, economic, and political mappings. Through material constructions and mapped references, Maycock brings to life key people within his family tree 'illustrating' who they were as tradespeople/wage-earners and where they lived and worked in Maycock's family's neighbourhoods in East London, England.



ADA STREET 1883
1995, ink, chalk, pencil & gesso on paper, framed size 92h x 72w cm

But Maycock's constructions are much more than 'illustrations' and family portraits. Although genealogies based on almost 200 years of parish and census records are Maycock's raw research material, the assembled data of who lived where, with whom, and where they worked, is open to all forms of interpretation. Keenly interested in the trades and vocations of key members in his family tree, the most significant, traceable piece of family history through this project, Maycock registers his presence in his family's continuum by synthesizing his visual arts 'trades' as researcher, conceptualizer, and studio object-maker. Due to the complexity of these agendas, Maycock produces hybrid objects which contain a fusion of materials, assembled 'things,' modeled representations, and an array of cartographic framing devises overlaid on descriptive materials. Indeed, very little is left to chance or serendipity within Maycock's practice; each material, object, and mapped reference is carefully chosen to represent Maycock's ongoing interest in the lives of distinct family members who become the subject matter of each construction.



BLUE ANCHOR ALLEY 1873
1996-7, wood & acrylic paint on canvas, 17h x 47w x 67d cm

It is important to realize how significantly Maycock's genealogical research informs his work. The data available to him from historical records often becomes the armature which guides Maycock through the organization of specific works. Consider the seven shirt drawings which are patterned with an excerpt from a period city map of neighbourhoods in London. Each shirt represents a head of a household (which historically tended to be male on all census returns) and identifies the street on which the family lived at the time of the particular written record. Maycock executes the series of seven shirts as drawn images which attempt to retain some of the quality of the printed map image/surface to which they make reference. In this case, the shirt is an apt metaphor for social class since the distinction today is still made between white collar professions and blue collar vocations. Referring to the naming of the 'head of household,' Maycock is also playing with the metaphor from previous generations of who 'wore the shirt' within a family unit. As well, Maycock's family shirts are further inscribed with the social class of where a household lived, again often an unequivocal signifier of class through neighbourhood identity. Indeed, Maycock begs to 'draw the conclusion' that, in the rarefied, class-conscious culture of England, people still wear their class on their collars and sleeves.

Whereas the shirt/map images are referential to the body as both garments and a worn social label, the eight foot stool assemblages in this exhibition are referential as domestic furniture objects of the home, albeit ones which imply the ability for the viewer to hover over them with a bird's eye view of mapped terrain. This is superimposed on an object associated with domestic relaxing and 'putting one's feet up.' The eight foot stools, like the shirts, reference the location of households within Maycock's family tree. The mapped images, executed in layers of transparent acrylic on canvas with text 'printed' in acrylic paint with lead type, quote the original printed images taken from old municipal maps. This painted canvas, though, is stuffed and fixed using traditional upholstery techniques; strategically positioned buttons draw in the canvas surface to identify the streets of former family residencies.

Once again Maycock plays with the fusion of his interest in genealogy with the material practice of an artist. In an article written for *Family Tree Magazine*, Maycock states:

Essentially I realized that when I read a parish record or census, or when I scan the surface of a map in search of an elusive court or alley, not only do I acquire information – the grist for the researcher's mill – but I also derive aesthetic pleasure much the same way as when I survey any visually inviting subject matter such as a landscape or a piece of architecture. Thus, for me, opened the gateway through which genealogical data passed to become a significant contributor to my studio activity. Rather than seeing the two pursuits in competition, I came to understand them for what they really were: two sides of the same coin.[2]

This is lucidly conveyed with the foot stools. Indeed, the images constructed pursue the interests of genealogical location of family members. But as hybrid objects fusing different forms with functions, each foot stool also becomes a rather humourous puffy painting, finely framed with crafted wood and humbly placed on the floor for the benefit of our 'all-knowing' gaze in the present to look down from above on images of the past.

From these graphic, mapped constructions produced in 1996 to 1998, Maycock then pursued his curiosity with the trades and vocations of his long deceased family members. This resulted in two bodies of work, each which continues to develop.

In many of these works, Maycock incorporates 'real' objects such as shoes, light bulbs, and barber scissors into small tableaus which are collectively etched with mapped information. In keeping with Denis Cosgrove's distinctions, the mapped cartographic material culled from Maycock's genealogical research, becomes but one component in the extended

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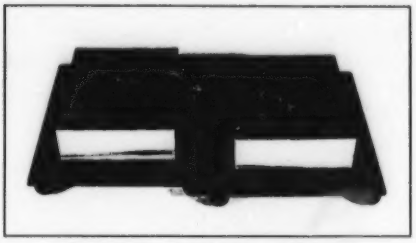
mapping which occurs within the art work. Again, Maycock's work is dense-packed with observations and speculations about the physical, spiritual, economic, and social terrain of his recent ancestors.



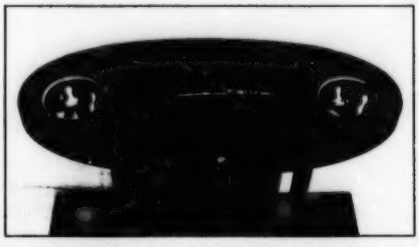
BOX MAKER: John Maycock 1859-1932
1997-8, wood & acrylic paint
15h x 62w x 37d cm

Consider *The Box Maker.* Maycock produced two finger-jointed boxwood boxes set side by side in an horizontal frame. The tops are carved with a map showing the streets, houses, and, in particular the Clarke, Nickolls & Coombs (Clarnico) works where John Maycock, the artist's great grandfather, was foreman in the box-making factory. The tops of the boxes are painted a pewter colour to resemble printing blocks and refer to the increased mechanization and emerging mass-production culture of the late 19th Century.

The Hairdresser, referring to John Joseph Maycock, the artist's grandfather, contains a half-sized reproduction of John Joseph's actual barber's table where the top, oval surface is carved with a relief map. The crossed barber's scissors, which are etched to continue the map across their surface, mark the spot where John Joseph Maycock provided his hairdressing services, as with the other pieces, an elegant tribute to the skills of manual labour.

With *The Shoemaker,* a pair of Maycock's shoes which he resoled in leather, is mounted vertically in a church-window-like structure. This reference is to James Maycock and Anne Cale's marriage, the artist's great, great, great grandparents, at Saint Luke Church on Old Street. From his research, Maycock determined that James was a shoemaker; consequently, the soles of the shoes are inscribed with a carved map that indicates the area around Saint Luke.

As was the historical practice of the times, men were named on the census reports as the 'heads of households.' Maycock, curious about this gendered condition, searched for female examples of household heads. One early case emerged which is included in this body of work: *The Stay-maker,* produced for Anne (Cale) Maycock. (As this is an ongoing series of work, Maycock plans to produce work in the near future as tributes to his mother, the Telephonist, and his grandmother, the Publican.) Anne (Cale) Maycock's husband, James, the Shoemaker, 'disappeared' from the records; the documents locate Anne as bringing up their sons on her own and supporting the family through her work as a 'stay-maker' best described as a maker of corsets. Maycock produced three pairs of stays, each made in canvas and painted with acrylic paint, installed on the wall one above the other with the map continuing across all three surfaces. Based on Maycock's research, the family lived within the same area of Finsbury, London, for all of Anne's working life. In reference to this, the style of each stay is consistent with the period in which they were produced.



HAIR DRESSER: John Joseph Maycock 1884-1932
1998/9, wood, scissors & metal cups
48h x 54.5w x 24d cm

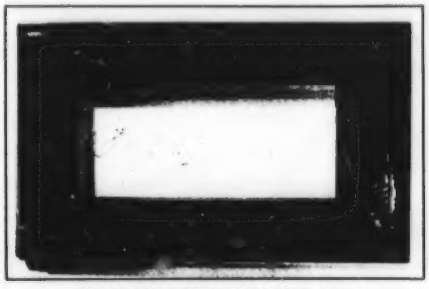
Maycock's recent series of ten framed, etched-glass works delves into another social reality of his ancestors. With illiteracy a common fact within the working class, many of the key documents surrounding marriages and other contractual relationships were signed and witnessed with an 'x' mark which represented a signature.

Maycock strategically etches the 'x' on glass of each represented relative in correct spatial relationship to mapped references on the frame. With this, the fourth distinct body of work in this exhibition, Maycock's mapping again takes poetic measure of geographic, historic, social, and economic contexts.

But there is also a dry, lurking humour weaving throughout this exhibition. Indeed, the title of this exhibition, **Relative Marks, Relative Surfaces • Bryan Maycock** points to the conceptual play Maycock enjoys with his vocation as an artist. The 'x' marks etched on glass are truly the marks of his relatives; the etched shoes, scissors, and boxes are surfaces of meaning which have been reinscribed with more relative information. And so it goes with each of Maycock's works as he playfully interweaves issues of content within his studio practice with the subject matter of genealogical research.

It is fascinating to think that many generations within Maycock's genealogy never moved households far from central neighbourhoods in London. Maycock, on the other hand, moved trans-Atlantic to Canada as well as trans-socially from his working class, urban roots to the professional practice of an artist and an art-college professor who now lives in a rural, seaside context. Through his practice, though, Maycock is analyzing this shift and, through the measures of visual art, mapping the physical, historical, social, and economic distances travelled. In a fitting homage to the subjects of his genealogical studies, Maycock has produced conceptually complex and elegant work fused with pragmatic, working-class logic revealed through his direct but lovingly handled materials, images, and family stories.

Peter Dykhuis



JAMES MAYCOCK & ANN CALE 1828
2000, acid-etched glass and wood
24h x 40w cm

1 Denis Cosgrove, 'Introduction' in Denis Cosgrove, editor, *Mappings* (London, 1999), Reaktion Books, p. 2.
2 Bryan Maycock, 'Walking a mile in their shoes' *Family Tree Magazine,* December 1999.

Artist Biography

Bryan Maycock was born in Newmarket, England in 1944. He graduated from the Bath Academy of Art in 1965 and emigrated to Canada in 1969. In 1984, he completed an MA at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

Since arriving in Canada, Maycock has had solo exhibitions at the London Public Art Museum (1970); the McIntosh Art Gallery, U.W.O.(1973,83); the Stratford Art Gallery (1975); Hart House, U of T (1975); the White Water Gallery, North Bay (1977,79,81); the Laurentian University Art Gallery (1977,82); the Anna Leonowens Gallery (1996); and Sutton House, London, England (2000).

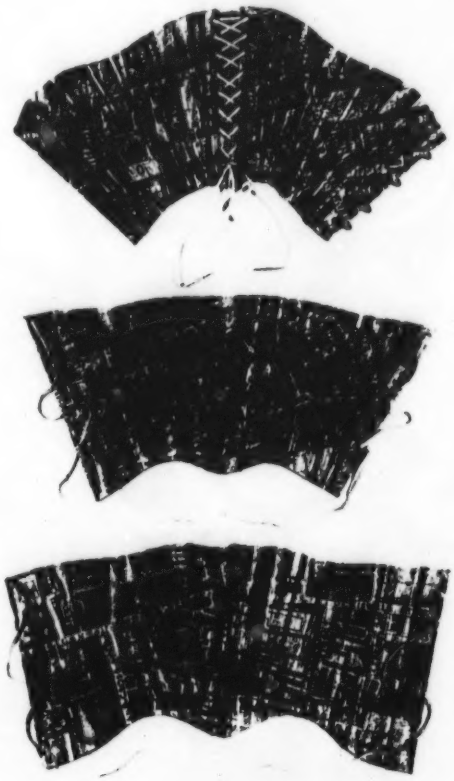
Group shows of note that have included Maycock's work are: *The Impulse Toward Self- Expression.* AGNS (1998); *Works on Paper.* Fachhochschule Pforzheim, Germany (1997); *Paperilla-Paperista.* Kuopio Academy of Crafts & Design, Kuopio, Finland (1996); *Far & Wide: The VANS 20th Anniversary Exhibition.* AGNS & Touring Nova Scotia (1996); *Second International Symposium on Electronic Art Film and Video Show.* Groningen, Holland (1990); *New Tools for Imaging.* Anna Leonowens Gallery & Centre for Art Tapes, Halifax (1990); *Miniatures.* London Regional Art Gallery, London (1983); *Ontario North Now.* Cultural Pavilion, Ontario Place, Toronto (1980); *Nine Cows Outstanding in Their Field.* Artspace, Peterborough (1979); *White Water on the Road to Nickel City.* Laurentian Art Gallery, Sudbury (1978); *Imprint 76.* Print and Drawing Council of Canada, Montreal (On tour in Ontario 1976- 78); *Chairs.* Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (1975); *Canadian Contemporary Graphics.* Winnipeg Art Gallery (1974); *Survey of Canadian Art Now.* Vancouver Art Gallery (1972,74); *Canadian Print Makers' Showcase.* Ottawa (1972,73,74); *40th Canadian Society of Graphic Art.* London (1973); *4-Man.* Norman MacKenzie Gallery, Saskatchewan (1971); A.C.A. Gallery, Calgary, Alberta (1971); S.U.B. Gallery, Edmonton (1971); *Pie in the Sky.* Artists' Co-op Exhibition, Toronto (1971).

Bryan Maycock lives in Mill Cove on the Aspotogan Peninsula and has been teaching full-time at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design since 1984.

List of Works

1. TENTER STREET 1861
2. BLUE ANCHOR ALLEY 1873
3. BRAEMAR STREET 1881
4. ADA STREET 1883
5. DAGMAR ROAD 1891
6. HIGH STREET 1911
7. CARY ROAD 1932
   1995, ink, chalk, pencil & gesso on paper, each 92h x 72w cm

8. PLAYHOUSE YARD 1859
9. BLUE ANCHOR ALLEY 1873
10. SUTHER ROAD 1881 & MONTAGUE ROAD 1886
11. ADA STREET 1883
12. DAGMAR ROAD 1891 & WICK ROAD 1900
13. HIGH STREET 1911
14. CARY ROAD 1932
15. TAVISTOCK PLACE 1932
    1996-7, wood & acrylic paint on canvas, each 17h x 47w x 67d cm



STAYMAKER: Ann (Cale) Maycock abt 1800 - aft 1861
1999, three painted, unstretched, shaped canvases individually 38h x 70w cm: 33h x 66w cm: 38h x 71w cm. assembled - 200h x 71w cm

16. BOX MAKER:
    John Maycock 1859-1932
    1997/8, wood & acrylic paint
    15h x 62w x 37d cm

17. ELECTRICIAN:
    John Maycock 1911-1983
    1997/8, wood, cast aluminum, acid-etched light bulb
    30h x 46w x 40d cm

18. SHOEMAKER:
    James Maycock abt 1800 - bef 1861
    1998, wood & shoes
    60h x 33w x 24d cm

19. SLATER:
    John Maycock abt 1836 - aft 1881
    1998, slate & wood
    41h x 20.5w x 30d cm

20. HAIR DRESSER:
    John Joseph Maycock 1884 - 1932
    1998/9, wood, scissors & metal cups
    48h x 54.5w x 24d cm

21/3. STAYMAKER:
    Ann (Cale) Maycock
    abt 1800 - aft 1861
    1999, three painted, unstretched, shaped canvases individually
    38h x 70w cm: 33h x 66w cm:
    38h x 71w cm.
    assembled - 200h x 71w cm

24. SARAH BEAKER 1808
25. JAMES MAYCOCK & ANN CALE 1828
26. MARTHA WHITEHOUSE 1850
27. SARAH SIMMONS 1878
28. JOHN MAYCOCK 1881
    2000, acid-etched glass and wood each 24h x 40w cm

29. MARTHA IRELAND 1861
30. SARAH MAYCOCK 1861
31. SARAH RUTH MAYCOCK 1884
    2000, each 27h x 32w cm

32. BRYAN MAYCOCK 2000
    2000, 21h x 19w cm